

Clifton Park doctor honored

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SCHENECTADY —

Clifton Park OB/GYN Dr. Fe Mondragon has been in the baby business for so long, she's delivered the next generation of babies to the now grown-up babies she delivered 30 or so years ago.

Cheerful, friendly and outgoing, Mondragon brushes aside recognition of her decades of dedication helping families. But she could not avoid the spotlight recently when she received the Jane Golub Leadership in Women's Health Award for her remarkable career in the local community.

Mondragon was feted at the 11th Annual Women's Night Out to Benefit Ellis Medicine's Bellevue Woman's Center. More than 600 women from across the Capital Region gathered in Albany to raise funds and awareness of the latest advances in breast and ovarian cancer research. A panel discussion included experts from the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Brigham and Women's Hospital, and a noted medical oncology specialist.

Mondragon was advised about the award before the event so she could invite family and friends. That doesn't mean she wasn't taken aback by the honor.

"When they told me a few weeks ago that I was receiving an award, I was very surprised," Mondragon said. "I've been doing this since 1981; I don't need any awards."

While the process of birthing babies hasn't physically changed, there've been many changes in the environment in which babies are born. The days when



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Women's Night Out, a benefit for Bellevue's Woman's Center, presented the Jane Golub Leadership in Women's Health Award to Dr. Fe Mondragon, of Clifton Park. Above, Mondragon is assisted off the podium by Neil Golub from the Golub Corporation.

moms-to-be went through labor in one room and end got wheeled down the hall to deliver their baby in a surgical room are blessedly over.

"There have been lots of improvements that have made it so much easier for the patient," Mondragon said. "There are comfortable birthing rooms now with all the equipment in the same room for anything that's needed. Bellevue was one of the first in the area to have birthing rooms."

A couple decades ago, fathers paced anxiously out in the waiting room until the doctor emerged with news. In more recent times, dads were in the birthing room to participate. Now, up to four people are allowed in the room to support the new mom.

"Everything is designed to make the process more

homelike," Mondragon says. "Every delivery is different."

Mondragon was a medical intern in 1970 when she was assigned to an OB/GYN rotation.

"As soon as I delivered my first baby I knew I'd be doing it the rest of my life," Mondragon said. "It's been a good life for me."

Babies don't usually arrive on schedule at a convenient 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. time frame. That's meant lots of sleepless nights for obstetric physicians.

"I get many calls in the middle of the night," Mondragon said with a laugh. "I always answer the phone on the first ring because I know it will be about a baby."

Over the span of years, Mondragon has heard from many of the parents whose babies she once delivered.

"Even if they move out of town, they stay in touch," Mondragon said. "I have one mom whose two sons I delivered that went to Iraq. She sends a letter every holiday. Another mom sends pictures of her kids, who are now 28 and 29. I also see many in person."

As one of the first witnesses to a baby's entrance into the world, Mondragon said she appreciates the chance to see what they've done in life.

"It's very heartening; it makes me so proud to see what they've accomplished," Mondragon said.

Mondragon said she'll stay in the baby business indefinitely.

"There are rumors here and there, but I have no plans to retire," Mondragon, 65, said. "Our practice is still very busy. Last year was a banner year."